Tab 1

Ottoman and the Wahhabi Challenge A Study of Conflict and Resistance (1788–1811)

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Abstract

This document examines the complex and often turbulent relationship between Ottoman and the rising Wahhabi movement during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By analyzing military confrontations, political correspondence, regional power struggles, and the broader Gulf context, the study reveals how both sides Rather than showing the war in 1811-1818

verification

50 Ad-Dir'iyyah: The ruined city of Ad-Dir'iyyah, from 1158H (1745CE) until its fall in 1233H (1818CE) was the capital of the First Saudi State; and in it is found their residences - until this day. The area has become known as 'Old Dir'iyyah' in which are found the abandoned fortresses and homes - enclosed by ruinous fortified walls. Ad-Dir'iyyah is not a single settlement; but of an area of settlement and agriculture - a Wadi-based oasis - on either side of an approximate eight kilometre stretch of Wadi Hanifah. It is situated north west of the city of Riyadh.

76 Shaikh 'Abdullāh Al-Bassam mentions that the lineage of this noble family goes back to the great companion of the Messenger of Allah (galtif)

Talhah bin Ubaidillah; one of the ten companions promised Paradise and who was killed near Al-Basrah itself (dedie). (See: 'Ulama Najd Khilal Thamaniyah

Qurun vol 1 p. 132).

Gathered From the Works of the Contemporary Writers, Historians and Scholars of that Era to the Present Day

'Abdul-'Aziz retired from work in his old age; and it was he who had dedicated more than forty years of his life in expeditions and warfare, so he did not become fatigued nor weary. He did not remain seated after a defeat - nor to that did he incline after victory, for he would advance with his men from the most distant point of the country to its farthermost part - daily - intrepid and tranquil, so he would drift one day into the Rub' Al-Khäli (Empty Quarter) and another day into Al-Qasim and another day into As-Samāwah in Iraq and yet

The Iraqi Campaign Against Tanuma (1786)

In 1201 AH / 1786 CE The Emir of Al-
Muntafiq a powerful tribal confederation in southern Iraq under Ottoman suzerainty, mobilized a massive force drawn from the tribes of Al-Muntafiq and launched a brutal assault on the town of Tanuma capturing it by force

Emboldened by this early
success, the invading forces then laid siege to the city of Buraidah, a key Saudi stronghold in the Qassim region However, just as the siege intensified, unrest erupted back in the lands of Al-Muntafiq. Fearing rebellion or instability at home, the Emir was forced to lift the siege and withdraw his army, leaving Buraidah unconquered

Wahhabi occupation of southern Iraq (1788-1794)

in 1788 Saud bin Abdulaziz invaded southern Iraq and attacked Al-Rawdhatayn pillaging the Town marking the first Saudi incursion into Ottoman Iraq later years in 1794 Imam Saud led another campaign targeting the Dhafir tribe in Al-Hijra district near the Iraqi border. The Saudi forces began shifting the battlefield to southern Iraq, asserting dominance after securing Al-Ahsa

Ibn Afaysan's Invasion of Kuwait (1793)

In 1793 the First Saudi State extended its military reach beyond central Arabia, launching a daring expedition against Kuwait, a rising maritime emirate aligned with the British Empire and the Ottoman-backed Banu Khalid. This strategic move came amid the broader Saudi campaign to assert dominance over the eastern Arabian coast and neutralize pockets of resistance that remained sympathetic to Ottoman interests or hostile to Wahhabi influence Under the command of the seasoned general Ibrahim ibn Afaysan, the Saudi forces advanced toward Kuwait

Wahhabis attacked an incursion against an British outpost at al-Qurain led to an awareness to the existence of the Saudi state to the British empire Gulf. On this occasion John Lewis Reinaud, a local emissary of the Company, was sent to re-establish good relations at the Saudi court and was the first European to visit al-Dir'iyya.

the Wahhabis under Ibrahim ibn Afaysan The Saudi troops demonstrated superior mobility and desert warfare tactics, pressuring Kuwaiti defenses and testing the resolve of its leadership. For the first time, Kuwait faced the military weight of the Najdi power that had already dismantled Banu Khalid rule in Al-Ahsa Though the campaign did not culminate in the permanent occupation of Kuwait the Saudi forces inflicted significant disruption

Campaigns of Thuwaini Al-Saadoun (1787-1797)

The series of Muntafiq campaigns against the emerging Saudi state in Eastern Arabia during the earlyThe conflict began in (1787 CE) when Thuwaini bin Abdullah Al-Muntafiqi led a large tribal-Ottoman coalition southward from Basra in an attempt to penetrate the Najdi interior His forces advanced toward Tanuma Taking it by force But he failed to capture Buraidah and Unayzah

Thuwainy withdrew without achieving his objectives Two years later, in (1789 CE), Thuwainy renewed his offensive with a more direct and ambitious strike on the northern approaches of Al-AhsaThis resulted in the significant Battle of As-Saman, where Saudi forces successfully confronted and defeated the invading army The assessment of casualties reaching more than 13,000 Death for the Iraqi side The failure at As-Saman forced the Iraqis and their tribal allies to retreat once again strengthening the Saudi position in the Gulf

The confrontation reached its height in (1796–1797 CE) when Thuwainy launched his most aggressive campaign, this time combining land and maritime movements along the Kuwaiti coast in a bid to break Saudi control over Al-Ahsa once and for all They marched to Al Ahsa A few skirmishes with the Wahhabis under Mohammed bin Muaqil which resulted in a Wahhabi Defeat When the army was busy setting up tents in Al-Shabak which is a Bani Khalid watershed close to the sea Sheikh Thuwaini separated from his entourage was assassinated by a slave mamluk of Bani Khalid named Tais The impact of the killing of Sheikh Thuwaini Al-Saadoun was significant in Baghdad and the Sublime Porte. In Baghdad, his assassination caused panic and anxiety because the state relied on his skills in repelling the Wahhabi advance towards Iraq Thuwaini's brother, tried to reconcile the defeat of the army, as he wanted to return to the Wahhabis but was Defeated in Battle of Sabhab the Wahhabis attacked the outskirts of Al-Muntafiq in Ramadan and in 1798 they sacked on Suq al-Shuyukh

Campaign of Ali Al-Kahiya (1798)

campaign that took place in the year 1213 AH/1798 AD and was led by Ali Pasha Al-Kakhiya or Al-Kahiya to invade Al-Ahsa in the year 1798 AD in preparation for the march towards Diriyah Ottoman Sultanate, the Sublime Porte asked Minister Sulayman Pasha the Great to eliminate the Wahhabi threat Ali Pasha's ignorance of military affairs and his poor treatment of the tribal leaders on whom he had to depend, many predicted the campaign's failure and collapse even before it took action. The target of the campaign was Diriyah, the Wahhabi capital, and from Basra the Pasha used the long, safer route to Al-Ahsa. His forces were able to occupy all the Wahhabi positions with the exception of the two garrison of Qasr Sahoud in Mubarraz and Al-Hofuf, and it was said that Qatif Castle held out for two months

The garrison of the fort of Mubarraz was headed by Suleiman bin Muhammad bin Majid, the commander of Qatif Castle was Ibrahim bin Ufaisan, during which Ali Pasha was ordered to besiege Al-Mirz Fort, but he failed to seize it despite the cracks he caused in the walls of the fort, because the artillery that the Pasha brought was suitable for striking defense centers built of Al-Rahas clay every day spent in the army requires double hardship and hardship. Then there was the loss of camels that warned the army of the possibility of losing them all. The

campaign's supplies and strength began to run out before it achieved its goal Because of boredom and thirst, the Ottoman army began to weaken, and it failed to achieve its basic mission, which was to prevent Al Saud's attacks on southern Iraq so the commander was forced to destroy much of his weapons or bury them in the dirt because he was unable to transport them. Supplies and ammunition decreased, so the soldiers asked their superiors to return

Prince Saud would have defeated the campaign, so messengers began between them to begin the Peace with Ali Pasha's In the end, Ali Pasha agreed through some senior tribal leaders to conclude a six-year non-aggression pact with the Wahhabis

Invasion of Bahrain (1801–1810)

Saudis now turned their attention to the strategically positioned island of Bahrain a wealthy and politically contested prize Bahrain had long been ruled by the Al Khalifa family, who had originally based themselves in the Qatari town of Zubarah. After the Saudi commander Ibrahim ibn ‘Afaysan entered Zubarah and brought it under Wahhabi control, the Al Khalifa

fled to Bahrain and settled in the village of Jaw around 1797 In 1800, Sultan bin Ahmad Al Busaidi of Muscat seized Bahrain and installed his brother Sa’id as governor, forcing the Al Khalifa once again into exile Seeking to reclaim their lost dominion, the Al Khalifa turned to a rising regional power the First Saudi State. They appealed to Imam Saud bin Abdulaziz for assistance in liberating Bahrain from Omani control

In a swift campaign in 1801, the Saudi forces crossed to Bahrain, expelled the Muscat garrison and declared the island part of the Saudi realm The Al Khalifa, however did not accept this betrayal quietly. Stripped of power and with several of their leaders including Sheikh Salman bin Ahmad detained in Diriyah They reached out to regional allies the Al Busaidis of Muscat sympathetic clans of the Utub confederation and even to Qajar Iran

They successfully captured Bahrain with help of the Omanis forces while are the Persian army suffered a Defeat from the Wahhabis near Khawr al-Muzayhir in Qatar Although the Wahhabis Never regained control of Bahrain they forced The Al Khalifa to release The Saudi garrison and pledge allegiance to Saud for the release of Al khalifa in Diriyah in 1811

Conquest of the Hijaz (1803–1806)

The early relationship between the First Saudi State and the Sharifs of Mecca was marked by tension and mistrust. Although the rulers of Diriyah initially sought peaceful dialogue with the Hejaz, particularly through scholarly delegations aimed at clarifying their reformist message, the Sharifs viewed the Wahhabi movement as a direct threat to their religious authority and local rule. The response from Mecca was swift and hostile. In the mid-18th century, when a delegation of thirty Najdi scholars arrived in Mecca to discuss their beliefs, they were imprisoned. The Qadi of Mecca subsequently issued a fatwa denouncing the Wahhabis as heretics As the Wahhabi movement spread across central Arabia and gradually consumed the Eastern Province, conflict with the Hejaz became inevitable. The situation escalated during the rule of Sharif Ghalib bin Musa'id, who banned Najdi pilgrims from performing the Hajj and treated the followers of the Wahhabi creed as apostates. Skirmishes and raids soon evolved into a full-scale military confrontation In 1790, Sharif Ghalib launched a large military expedition into central Arabia. Despite his numerical advantage and logistical preparation, his campaign ended in a series of humiliating defeats in places such as Al-Bassam, Al-Shu’ara, and Al-Burood. The Saudi forces, under the leadership of Saud bin Abdulaziz, responded with counterattacks, defeating Ghalib’s tribal allies such as the Mutayr and Shammar, and expanding their control deep into the Najd-Hijaz frontier Repeated attempts by Ghalib to seek help from the Ottoman Empire proved futile. Even when he pleaded his case to Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar and the Sultan, no decisive action was taken. By the mid-1790s, Wahhabi influence was already taking root in areas like Turaif, Bishah, and Tihama. As more tribes and local leaders, including the powerful Othman al-Mudayfi, switched allegiance to the Saudis, the Sharif’s grip on the Hejaz weakened considerably. In 1802, the Saudi leader Saud bin Abdulaziz received Othman al-Mudayfi in Diriyah and formally appointed him as his ally in the Hejaz. Mudayfi began organizing local tribes against the Sharif’s rule and incited rebellion in the countryside. With reinforcements from Najd, including a contingent led by the Amir of Bisha, Mudayfi laid siege to the city of Ta’if. After intense fighting, the Sharif’s forces collapsed, and Ta’if fell into Wahhabi hands. The aftermath saw atrocities, including looting and the execution of those who resisted. The event sent shockwaves across the Hejaz With Ta’if captured, Saud turned his attention to the holy city of Mecca. Sharif Ghalib, recognizing his inability to withstand the advancing Saudi army, fled to Jeddah and left the city in the care of his brother, Sharif Abd al-Mu'in. In a bid to save the city from bloodshed, Abd al-Mu'in surrendered Mecca on the condition that he remain in office under the new regime.

On 8 Muharram 1218 AH (1803 CE), Prince Saud entered Mecca as a pilgrim. He granted amnesty to the citizens, distributed charity, and began a program of religious reform. Tombs and shrines were leveled, and all symbols of what the Wahhabis viewed as idolatry were destroyed. Saud then wrote to Sultan Selim III, informing him of the conquest and requesting that the annual pilgrimage caravans from Damascus and Cairo be discontinued unless they ceased certain practices deemed heretical Despite this show of force, the Wahhabis failed to

take Jeddah, which remained well-defended and out of reach due to the Saudis' lack of a navy. After a brief siege, Saud withdrew and returned to Diriyah Meanwhile, the city of Medina remained under siege for two years by the tribes of Harb and the people of Quba who had embraced the Wahhabi movement. In 1805, the people of Medina, facing starvation and isolation, pledged allegiance to the Saudi state. The Prophet's Mosque was placed under Wahhabi administration, and Ottoman officials were expelled In the final act of this conquest, Saud returned to Mecca in 1806. Sharif Ghalib, now politically isolated and militarily exhausted, pledged allegiance to the Saudi state. Saud entered the city with great ceremony, expelled all Ottoman soldiers, and issued orders for the Friday sermons to be conducted in his name, not that of the Ottoman Sultan. He then replaced the Kiswah (cover of the Kaaba) with one made in Diriyah, marking the symbolic culmination of Wahhabi dominance over the holy cities.

Though the conquest of the Hijaz marked a significant high point for the First Saudi State, it also drew the attention and wrath of the Ottoman Empire. The occupation of the two holiest cities by a movement viewed as rebellious and heretical eventually provoked the Ottomans into commissioning Muhammad Ali Pasha of Egypt to recover the Hijaz a conflict that would soon unfold into the longest and bloodiest campaign of the Wahhabi wars

Wahhabi raids in Persian Gulf (1805)

As the First Saudi State consolidated its rule over al-Ahsa in the mid-1790s, its leadership sought to extend influence across the Persian Gulf, viewing the region not only as a strategic frontier but also as an ideological battleground for Wahhabi reform

whose naval dominance and hostility toward European influence made them natural allies. By 1805, after adopting Wahhabi doctrine, the Qasimis launched a series of coordinated naval raids across the Gulf, targeting British, Muscati, and Iranian shipping in what they regarded as legitimate religious warfare rather than piracy These attacks intensified regional tensions, with British observers noting a sharp rise in assaults after 1805 and debating whether the Qasimis acted out of conviction or coercion. That same year, empowered by Wahhabi support, the coalition captured several Iranian islands, including the strategic island of Qeshm near the Strait of Hormuz Which previously owned by the Persians marking the easternmost expansion of Wahhabi power and signaling their rejection of foreign control over Muslim waters.

Conflict with Oman and Persia (1806-1811)

its ambitions toward Oman, whose strategic position on the Indian Ocean and alliance with Persia threatened Saudi influence along the Gulf Oman itself had fallen into civil war in 1806, pitting Qais bin Ahmad supported by Wahhabi agents and several interior tribes—against Said bin Sultan, who relied on British and Persian backing. At the same time, Fath-Ali Shah Qajar sought to check Wahhabi expansion, but his initial attempts to intervene collapsed, leaving the Wahhabis free to deepen their involvement in Omani affairs. With Saudi assistance, Qais temporarily seized Muscat in 1807 before being assassinated, plunging the country deeper into instability and exposing its northern interior to

Saudi incursions Under the command of Mutlaq bin Muhammad Al-Mutairi appointed by Diriyah as both military governor and enforcer of Wahhabi doctrine the Saudis launched a sweeping invasion of northern Oman. Their early victories at Al-Buraimi, Suhar, Nakhal, and Ibri shattered Omani defenses and carried Wahhabi authority deep into Jabal Akhdar, bringing them to the doorstep of Muscat by 1808 Alarmed, Said bin Sultan dispatched his brother Salem to negotiate with the Qajar court in Shiraz, resulting in a Persian-Omani alliance under the command of Saadi Khan. With a force of 3,000 men, Saadi Khan landed in Barka, retook the forts of Nakhal, and launched a naval strike on Qatar that destroyed Zubarah and captured Saudi-aligned tribal leaders. In response, Mutlaq bin Al-Mutairi rallied a coalition of tribal forces

supported by Sheikh Mohammed Al-Jabri The two sides clashed fiercely near Izki, where Saadi Khan was wounded and forced to flee Wahhabi forces captured the castle, artillery, and over a hundred Persian troops. Mutlaq pressed onward, seizing Samail, destroying two Persian ships anchored at Muttrah and tightening his grip over Oman's interior routes. Meanwhile, in 1809, Saudi-aligned forces retaliated along the Persian coast by killing the Qajar governor of Bandar Abbas and briefly occupying the city before besieging nearby Minab. That same year, a major Persian expedition from Bushire attempted to strike the Qawasim of Ras al-Khaimah but suffered a disastrous naval defeat at the hands of 22 Qasimi war dows, losing six ships and their commander Bahram Khan Zandani. This proved to be Iran's only serious attempt at projecting naval force against the Wahhabis during the conflict

A Persian-Omani counter-offensive briefly regained ground in Muscat and attacked Al-Ain Saadi khan reports back to Persia claims that during that year he attempted a campaign in najd which many British reports disclaimed the Report as being A fantasy lie to keep the Shah regime intact but in 1810–1811 the Wahhabis returned with overwhelming force. Mutlaq led a second siege of Muscat and successfully sacked the city, causing thousands of casualties and forcing Saadi Khan and the Omani elite to flee

Emir Saud bin Abdulaziz even sent a delegation to Shiraz Obtaining full diplomatic status that the Persians would not Would not intervene in the conflict with The Saudis This marked a victory for the wahhabis the Persian Government in fact, did not possess The capabilities to fight the wahhabis direct conflict therefore it was politic in Persia not to disclose its own weakness,

WAHHABI RAIDS ON IRAQ (1802-1811)

tensions flared once more when the Khaza'il tribe a powerful Shiite tribal faction based near Najaf, ambushed a group of Saudis near the city, slaughtering nearly 300 of them in cold blood. The massacre shocked Diriyah and ignited calls for vengeance across Najd. Diplomatic channels were initially pursued the Saudis formally protested the killings and demanded blood money from the Ottoman wali of Baghdad. Ali Pasha dispatched a delegate Abdulaziz bin Abdullah Al-Shawi, to Diriyah during his return from pilgrimage to mediate with Imam Abdul Aziz bin Muhammad. But the negotiations failed

By 1802 the time for negotiation had passed. Imam Saud Al-Kabir, son of Abdul Aziz, led a formidable Saudi force northward into Ottoman Iraq. Their destination was Karbala, one of the most sacred cities in Shiite Islam. The campaign was driven by a mix of vengeance, religious zeal, and strategic calculation not only to retaliate for the massacre of 1799 but also to assert Wahhabi authority over the Shiite regions bordering Najd.

The Saudi army descended upon Karbala in a swift and devastating assault. The defenders were overwhelmed. The Saudis demolished shrines, including the gilded dome of the tomb of Imam Hussein, a move that sent shockwaves throughout the Shiite world. They also looted the city's treasury and religious endowments before rapidly withdrawing southward This attack deeply humiliated the Ottoman Empire and enraged the Qajar Shah of Iran, Fath-Ali Shah, who pressured the Ottoman governor to act and threaten the Iraqi government with invasions In 1803, Imam Abdul Aziz bin Muhammad, the ruler of the First Saudi State, was assassinated in Diriyah by a man named Mulla Uthman an Afghan from Baghdad who had witnessed the horrors of the Karbala sack Abdullah who swiftly retaliated and killed the assassin

Saud Al-Kabir ascended to leadership with a fury that matched his father's vengeance In response to the assassination, Saud Al-Kabir launched a brutal punitive campaign against various Iraqi tribes and towns. His forces raided the Dhafir tribe, who were encamped in the springtime pastures of the desert. The raid resulted in mass pillaging Then Saud marched toward Basra in 1803 entered it by force, killed many of its people They then struck at a contingent of Al-Muntafiq tribesmen stationed near Basra. Their leader Mansur bin Thamir Al-Saadoun was captured and the remaining fighters were slain or driven off In 1803 Saudi forces stormed Zubayr leaving many dead and razing the structures at looted their farmlands

After completing the campaign the Saudi army returned to Diriyah, their mission fulfilled in blood and fire Baghdad deemed it impossible to defeat the Wahhabis in the depths of Arabia therefore In 1804 Wahhibi troops overran the neighbourhood of Zubair and Basra In 1804/1805 Saud defeated the powerful Zafir tribe which had tried to disobey him And besieging Nasiriyah Later, entering and pillaging the city Jones an British agent fear the collapse of the empire In 1805 he estimated that Baghdad had lost 40 per cent of its commercial revenue in seven years owing to the damage to confidence resulting from successive Wahhabi incursions in 1806 the Wahhabis besieged and Sacked al-Najaf, and the Wahhabis raided Samawa and they were successful Same with Zubair In 1808 Saud appeared in the environs of Karbala but the town was well protected the In the same year Saud Gathered 45,000 Troops they departed from Diriyah They marched toward Baghdad The invaders managed to storm the southern side of thr city And defeating the enemy And withdraw back to Najd in 1809 When Saud bin Abdul Aziz heard of the death of Sharif Surur, he seized the

opportunity and sought to expand the circle of Influence in Iraq He mustered 15,000 Wahhabis from They seized the fortress of Al-Jufair, which overlooks the Euphrates River. He annihilated the army of Suleiman Pasha which numbered casualties 20,000 fighters were slain Saud rejoiced in this victory and attacked the fortress of Al-Siraj

In late 1809 the new pasha of Baghdad sent a regular army and Iraqi bedouin against the Wahhabis; the troops penetrated a short distance But they were defeated in the battle of Tufair by the Anaza and Zafir Tribes Loyal to the wahhabis in 1810 an Campaign Ledby Abdallah bin Saud They departed from Diriyah that pushed north of Iraq The attack to the city Al Diwaniyah they broke through the city defences Plundering A sector of the city before continuing through their campaign A small Iraqi field force Was led by Hasan Al-Karimi was attacked by the forces of Abdallah Hasan Al Karimi was killed in the attack Abdallah continued the campaign A large force form Baghdad departed to end the Wahhabi campaign they met at the City of Al Azizyah it was a large battle which the forces of Abdullah emerged victorious and went near the vicinity of the Baghdad and attacked hillah

the Saudi state by expanding outside the Arabian Peninsula, annexing the lands west of the Euphrates River from Ana to Basra to Saudi territory The governors of Iraq were unable to eliminate the First Saudi State or defeat it in this war which prompted the Ottoman state to request the governor of Egypt to go to war with the wahhabis

Despite,the numerous Saudi campaigns against Iraq, which lasted for about a quarter of a century from (1788-1811 CE) they were unable to annex the areas they entered to the Saudi state However, the results were mostly in favor of the Saudi forces. Furthermore, the Saudi forces objective was not to annex these areas to the Saudi state, but rather to discipline their opponents and combat heresies and superstitions in these regions The Saudi state was also able to collect zakat from the

tribes located in southern Iraq, but only intermittently, as the loyalty of those tribes was not constant. The Saudi state did not appoint officials in those areas because most Saudi campaigns were characterized by speed and agility, and they did not stay in any Iraqi city for long with disciplining those who disobeyed them. In addition, the areas most familiar with Saudi movements were inhabited by nomadic tribes whose defining characteristic was their nomadic lifestyle